

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SCCT-01 DHA-02 EB-07 AID-05 PC-01 /073 W

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P R 301953Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4167

INFO USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS ASEC VE

SUBJECT: ACCUSED DEPUTY ISSUES DEFENSE; OTHER  
CASES OF TORTURE ALLEGED

REF: CARACAS 9140

SUMMARY. DEPUTY MEZA DEFENDED HIMSELF BEFORE THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES JULY 28 OF CHARGES THAT HE IS IMPLICATED IN THE NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING. JOSE VICENTE RANGEL ACCUSED DISIP OFFICIALS OF TORTURING TWO OTHER SUSPECTS IN THE CASE AND MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS HAVE BEEN ORDERED FOR ALL DETAINEES. AD DEPUTY JAIME LUSINCHI DENIED THA TORTURE IS A SYSTEM USED BY THE GOVERNMENT. CARACAS REMAINS CALM. END SUMMARY.

1. MEP DEPUTY SALOM MEZA ESPINOZA. WHOM INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE JULY 26 ACCUSED OF COLLABORATING WITH THE KIDNAPPERS OF WILLIAM NIEHOUS, VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED HIMSELF BEFORE THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES JULY 28 BY CHARGING THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ "HAS A GREATER CAPACITY TO HATE THAN SOME MIGHT SUPPOSE." HE TOLD OF A SERIES OF ALTERCATIONS BETWEEN PEREZ AND HIMSELF GOING BACK TO 1963 AND CHARGED THAT PEREZ HAD ORDERED LEPAGE TO ACCUSE MEZ OF ACTING AS AN ACCOMPLICE OF NIEHOUS' ABDUCTORS. MEZA  
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ALLEGED THAT THE GOV WANTS NIEHOUS TO BE KILLED BY HIS

CAPTORS IN ORDER TO COVER UP THE PAYMENT OF \$83 MILLION BY OWENS-ILLINOIS TO "HIGH OFFICIALS" TO SECURE A LARGER MARKET HERE FOR ITS PRODUCTS. MEZA ALSO CHARGED THAT A POLICE APPARATUS DIRECTED BY ERASTO FERNANDEZ OPERATES OUT OF MIRAFLORES PALACE UNDER THE CONTROL OF PRESIDENT PEREZ. DISPLAYING HIS SOCIALIST COLORS, MEZA TOLD OF FORMER REVOLUTIONARIES WHO "BETRAYED THE REVOLUTION" TO BECOME CONFIDENTS OF THE PRESIDENT, A SIGN OF THE GOV'S "IMMORALITY AND CORRUPTION."

2. INDEPENDENT-MAS DEPUTY JOSE VICENTE RANGEL ATTACKED THE GOV'S HANDLING OF SUSPECTS IN THE NIEHOUS CASE AND CHARGED THAT DECEASED LEFTIST LEADER JORGE RODRIGUEZ HAD BEEN "SENTENCED TO DEATH" BY THE POLICE. HE ACCUSED DISIP OFFICIALS OF HAVING TORTURED RODRIGUEZ FROM THE TIME OF HIS DETENTION JULY 23 UNTIL HIS DEATH JULY 25 FOR WHICH THE ENTIRE SERVICE BORE THE GUILT. RANGEL FURTHERMORE CLAIMED THAT TWO OTHER DETAINEES, IVAN PADILLA AND DAVID NIEVES, HAD ALSO BEEN TORTURED BY DISIP AND PROPOSED THAT A CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES COMMITTEE INVESTIGATE HIS CHARGES AT DISIP HEADQUARTERS.

3. SPEAKING FOR THE GOV, AD FLOOR LEADER JAIME LUSINCHI DENIED THAT TORTURE IS "A SYSTEM USED BY THE GOVERNMENT" AND ASSERTED THAT THE ACTIONS OF THE "FOUR PSYCHOPATHS" WHO KILLED RODRIGUEZ WERE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ENTIRE GOV. LUSINCHI SAID THAT THE AD PARTY ABHORED RODRIGUEZ'S DEATH AND CLAIMED THEIR STRUGGLES HAD DEMONSTRATED THEIR "DEEP CONCERN FOR LIFE." SPEAKING TO THE PRESS, CONGRESS PRESIDENT AND AD PRESIDENT GONZALO BARRIOS CALLED RODRIGUEZ'S DEATH A "VERY DELICATE, VERY GRAVE" MATTER. ON THE OTHER HAND AD DEPUTY JOSE ANGEL CILIBERTO TOLD EMBOFF JULY 29 THAT THE GOV HAS SUFFICIENT PROOF TO CONVINCE THE CONGRESS TO LIFT PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY OF MEZA AND HERRERA.

4. AS A RESULT OF DEPUTY RANGEL'S CHARGES, FISCAL GENERAL JOSE RAMON MEDINA JULY 28 ORDERED THAT INVESTIGATORS FROM HIS OFFICE BE PRESENT DURING THE QUESTIONING OF DETAINEES AT DISIP HEADQUARTERS AND THAT ALL DETAINEES BE EXAMINED MEDICALLY. HE STATED THAT THERE WAS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THREE SUSPECTS, IVAN PADILLA, FRANCISCO CEDENO, AND DAVID NIEVES, HAD BEEN TORTURED BUT THAT HE WISHED TO AWAIT A MEDICAL REPORT BEFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAKING A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT. MEDINA SAID ALL OTHER DISIP PRISONERS WERE IN GOOD HEALTH.

5. CARACAS REMAINED CALM JULY 28. A MIMEOGRAPHED COMMUNIQUE DISTRIBUTED CLANDESTINELY TO THE MEDIA CLAIMED THAT NONE OF THE PERSONS HELD BY THE POLICE FOR QUESTIONING HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING, BUT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE COMMUNIQUE CAME FROM THE GROUP HOLDING

NIEHOUS CAPTIVE. ALL PRIVATE FLIGHTS INTO AND OUT OF THE CITY ARE BEING CHECKED. DISIP OFFICIALS CONFIRMED THE ARREST JULY 28 OF ANOTHER SUSPECT IN THE CASE BUT REFUSED TO REVEAL THE SUSPECT' NAME. OTHER DETENTIONS HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM GUARICO STATE WHERE A LARGE POLICE/MILITARY OPERATION IS UNDERWAY.

6. COMMENT. DEPUTY MEZA'S DEFENSE OF HIMSELF IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES INDICATED THAT HE MAY VERY WELL BE IMPLICATED IN THE NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING AS CHARGED BY THE GOV, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE HIS SPEECH SHOWED UNUSUAL KNOWLEDGE OF SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THE NIEHOUS CASE AND ECHOED THE ABDUCTORS' PROPAGANDA ABOUT OWENS-ILLINOIS.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLICE FORCES, ATROCITIES, ALLEGATIONS, PRISONERS WELFARE, INVESTIGATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 30 JUL 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ullricre  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976CARACA09244  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760295-0700  
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**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 CARACAS 9140  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ullricre  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <05 NOV 2004 by ullricre>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ACCUSED DEPUTY ISSUES DEFENSE; OTHER CASES OF TORTURE ALLEGED  
**TAGS:** PINS, ASEC, VE, (MEZA ESPINOZA, SALOM)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006